

A

E R M O N

Preached before the

Incorporated SOCIETY

FOR THE

Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts;

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING

IN THE

Church of ST. MARY-LE-BOW,

On FRIDAY, *February 19, 1773.*

By the Right Reverend

NATHAN SHIPLEY,

Lord Bishop of ST. ASAPH.

A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N,

for J. WHISTON, Bookfeller, in *Fleet-Street.*

M DCC LXXIV.

Two Pence, or One Penny for not less than Fifty.]

*At the Anniversary Meeting of the Society for the
Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts
in the Vestry-Room of St. Mary-le-Bow, on
Friday the 19th Day of February, 1773;*

AGREED, that the Thanks of the
SOCIETY be given to the Right
Reverend the Lord Bishop of *St. Asaph*, for
his Sermon preached this Day by his Lord-
ship before the SOCIETY; and that his
Lordship be desired to deliver a Copy of the
same to the SOCIETY to be Printed.

Richard Hind, Secretary



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LUKE, Chap. ii. Ver. 14.

GLORY BE TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, AND ON
EARTH PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.

***** I *****
KNOW no passage in the holy scriptures,
that may be adapted with more propriety to
our present meeting, than this declaration
from the angel of the gracious purposes of
Heaven in publishing the Gospel. That
which was the design of the Gospel itself must necessarily
be the chief object of a Society instituted to propagate it.
The generous office, we have undertaken, is by instruct-
ing distant countries in religious truths to promote the
peace and happiness of mankind. It is by such actions
that the holy scriptures allow the sons of men to consider
themselves as glorifying God; and such, we are assured,
are the most likely to obtain his favour and good-will to
men. Without entering into a farther explication of the
words, suffer me to desire that you will keep in your
minds the general principle contained in them; and you
will find it easily applicable to the facts, the circum-
stances, and the different situations of things, which I
shall take leave to mention, as being more or less con-
nected with the credit and influence of this Society.

The first object of our zeal was the conversion of the
Indians; and it should seem no difficult task to influence
the minds of men, who have few religious notions of
their own growth, and appear to have no strong prejudices
in favour of them. Such minds one would think might
easily be led to receive a religion of the most simple form,
consisting of a few great luminous principles, and in-
culcating plain rules of life and conduct, which must
approve their usefulness in desarts, as well as in cities.
Such doctrines, founded on Divine authority, would, in

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all appearance, be particularly welcome, where the restraints of law and government have but little force. Yet it has happened contrary to our hopes, that the preaching of the gospel has been of small efficacy amongst the Indians. The sagacity for which they are remarkable seems to be of a partial kind, and to partake more of instinct than of reason. They can employ great art to obtain their ends; to procure what they desire; or to gain a superiority over an enemy: but their passions and habits proceeding always in one narrow track, they have neither relish nor discernment for the clearest truths, to which they have not been accustomed. After shewing the greatest address and courage in subduing or surprising an enemy, they cannot comprehend that it would be generous not to torture him; and that it would be wise to give such treatment as they would wish to receive. They have besides an untameable savage spirit, which has refused to hear the voice of instruction; which has obstinately rejected the arts and improvements of the Europeans, and has hitherto only adopted the most beastly of their vices.

For these reasons, though we ought not to remit our endeavours, yet I fear we have little reason to hope for their conversion, till some great change in their manners has made them abandon their savage vagrant life, and prepared them for the discipline of law and religion.

But a more promising field is opened to our hopes, in the populous provinces of our own colonies. The rapid increase of their numbers on every side, in a country where the means of subsistence are easy and open, together with the perpetual accession of inhabitants from Europe, are continually forming new congregations. Now knowledge of all kinds will probably be rare amongst men who are entering into the first rudiments of society; and while their attention is bent on procuring the necessaries of life, it is not to be expected that they should be either diligent or successful in the improvement of religious knowledge. Here therefore the instructions that are conveyed to them by the liberality of this Society, may be of essential and durable service. This is sowing the good

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good seed in a fruitful soil; and what is so planted may produce returns of an hundred fold, and afford fruit and nourishment to future generations. Allow me to indulge a little the pleasure of contemplating in prospect the good that may result in after-times from this our labour of love.

Perhaps the annals of history have never afforded a more grateful spectacle to a benevolent and philosophic mind, than the growth and progress of the British colonies in North America. We see a number of scattered settlements, formed at first for the purposes of trade, or from a spirit of enterprize; to procure a maintenance, or to enjoy the exercise of their religion, which in those unhappy days was refused them at home; growing by degrees, under the protection of their mother-country, who treated them with the indulgence due to their weakness and infancy, into little separate common-wealths. Placed in a climate, that soon became fruitful and healthy by their industry; possessing that liberty which was the natural growth of their own country, and secured by her power against foreign enemies, they seem to have been intended, as a solitary experiment, to instruct the world to what improvements and happiness mankind will naturally attain, when they are suffered to use their own prudence, in search of their own interests. I must repeat it again, as an observation not unworthy of this audience and this occasion, that there is no instance in the records of time, where infant colonies have been treated with such a just and liberal indulgence.

Had these settlements been left to shift for themselves, they would have perished and been swept away by the rough course of accidents, like seeds that are scattered by the winds, of which not one in a thousand takes root and comes to maturity. Had they been planted by any kingdom but our own, the inhabitants would have carried with them the chains and oppression, to which they had been inured at home: they would have been subject to the schemes of ministers and favourites, and have suffered more from their ignorance than from their rapine. At best they could only have hoped to be considered as the live

stock upon a lucrative farm, which might sometimes be suffered to thrive for the sake of it's produce.

But Britain from the beginning has treated her colonies in a very different manner. She has not sold them her protection at the price of their liberty: she has always been ready to encourage their industry, to relieve their wants, and to revenge their injuries; and has sought no other advantage from so generous a conduct, but the mutual benefit arising to distant countries from the supply of each other's wants. Adhering to these maxims, she has continued to reap the fruits of her own wisdom and moderation in a surprising encrease of national greatness; while her prosperous colonies are spreading without interruption over a vast continent, that may in a few centuries rival the commerce, the arts, and the power of Europe.

It is difficult for man to look into the destiny of future ages. The designs of Providence are too vast and complicated, and our own powers are too narrow, to admit of much satisfaction to our curiosity. But when we see many great and powerful causes constantly at work, we cannot doubt of their producing proportionable effects. The colonies in North America have not only taken root and acquired strength; but seem hastening with an accelerated progress to such a powerful state, as may introduce a new and important change in human affairs. Descended from ancestors of the most improved and enlightened part of the old world, they receive as it were by inheritance all the improvements and discoveries of their mother-country. And it happens fortunately for them to commence their flourishing state at a time when the human understanding has attained to the free use of it's powers, and has learned to act with vigour and certainty. They may avail themselves not only of the experience and industry, but even of the errors and mistakes of former days. Let it be considered for how many ages great part of the world appears not to have thought at all; how many more they have been busied in forming systems and conjectures; while reason has been lost in a labyrinth of words, and they never seem to have suspected, on what frivolous matters their mind

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were employed. And let it be well understood, what rapid improvements, what important discoveries have been made in a few years, by a few countries, with our own at their head, which have at last discovered the right method of using their faculties. May we not reasonably expect that a number of provinces, possessed of these advantages, and quickened by mutual emulation, with only the common progress of the human mind, should very considerably enlarge the boundaries of science? The vast continent itself, over which they are gradually spreading, may be considered as a treasure, yet untouched, of natural productions, that shall hereafter afford ample matter for commerce and contemplation. And if we reflect what a stock of knowledge may be accumulated by the constant progress of industry and observation, fed with fresh supplies from the stores of nature, assisted sometimes by those happy strokes of chance, which mock all the powers of invention, and sometimes by those superior characters, which arise occasionally to instruct and enlighten the world; it is difficult even to imagine to what height of improvement their discoveries may extend.

And perhaps they may make as considerable advances in the arts of civil government and the conduct of life.

We have reason to be proud, and even jealous, of our excellent constitution. But those equitable principles on which it was formed, an equal representation, (the best discovery of political wisdom) and a just and commodious distribution of power, which with us were the price of civil wars, and the reward of the virtues and sufferings of our ancestors, descend to them as a natural inheritance, without toil or pain. But must they rest here as in the utmost effort of human genius? Can chance and time, the wisdom and the experience of publick men, suggest no new remedy against the evils, their vices and ambition are perpetually apt to cause? May they not hope, without presumption, to preserve a greater zeal for piety and publick devotion than we have done? For sure it can hardly happen to them, as it has to us, that when religion is best understood and rendered most pure and reasonable,

that then should be the precise time, when many cease to believe and practise it, and all in general become most indifferent to it. May they not possibly be more successful than their mother-country has been, in preserving that reverence and authority, which is due to the laws? to those who make, and to those who execute them? May not a method be invented of procuring some tolerable share of the comforts of life to those inferior useful ranks of men, to whose industry we are indebted for the whole? Time and discipline may discover some means to correct the extreme inequalities of condition between the rich and the poor, so dangerous to the innocence and the happiness of both. They may fortunately be led by habit and choice to despise that luxury, which is considered with us as the true enjoyment of wealth. They may have little relish for that ceaseless hurry of amusements, which is pursued in this country without pleasure, exercise, or employment. And perhaps after trying some of our follies and caprices, and rejecting the rest, they may be led by reason and experiment to that old simplicity, which was first pointed out by nature, and has produced those models which we still admire in arts, eloquence, and manners. The diversity of new scenes and situations, which so many growing states must necessarily pass through, may introduce changes in the fluctuating opinions and manners of men, which we can form no conception of. And not only the gracious disposition of Providence, but the visible preparation of causes, seems to indicate strong tendencies towards a general improvement.

And I hope that these matters, which I have presumed to dwell upon perhaps a little too minutely, will not appear totally foreign to the present occasion, if we reflect to whatever limits the population of our colonies may extend, whatever states and kingdoms they may form; through all the progress of their fortunes and prosperity; the labours of this Society will probably continue to operate with an increasing influence. That sober and reasonable sense of duty, which has been taught under our direction to a few scattered villages, may give it's

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character hereafter to the religion and morals of a powerful state. The weak and imperfect fruits we reap at present may bear no higher proportion to the future benefits that may arise, than that of a few scattered seeds to the fulness of the harvest.

And perhaps the disinterested zeal of this Society for the instruction of our brethren in North America, may tend to revive that union and cordiality between the mother-country and it's colonies, which for the common utility ought never to have been interrupted. It is by no means decent from this place to censure the conduct of our superiors, or even to suppose it blameable; but surely as good subjects we may wish and endeavour to heal the wounds of our country, without enquiring by what hand they were inflicted. We may, and I think we ought to wish, that the true interest of the whole extensive community may govern our future contests, and regulate all our claims. Our mutual relation was formed, and has hitherto subsisted, by a perpetual communication of benefits. We want the produce of soils and climates, that differ so much from our own; and they will long have occasion for the fruits of our arts, our industry and our experience. And should they ever cease to want our protection, which as long as we render it beneficial to them they never will; yet we may still continue united in interest, in commerce, and the grateful remembrance of old services. May the wise and good on both sides, without enquiring too curiously into the grounds of past animosities, endeavour by all prudent means to restore that old publick friendship and confidence, which made us great, happy and victorious. To countries so closely united it is needless, and even dangerous, to have recourse to the interpretation of charters and written laws. Such discussions excite jealousy, and intimate an unfriendly disposition. It is common utility, mutual wants and mutual services, that should point out the true line of submission and authority. Let them respect the power that saved them; and let us always love the companions of our dangers and our glories. If we consider their prosperity as making part of our own, we shall feel no jealousy

jealously at their improvements; and they will always cheerfully submit to an authority, which they find exercised invariably to the common advantage. During all our happy days of concord, partly from our national moderation, and partly from the wisdom, and sometimes perhaps from the carelessness of our ministers, they have been trusted in a good measure with the intire management of their affairs: and the success they have met with ought to be to us an ever memorable proof, that the art of government consists in not governing too much. And why should friendship and gratitude, and long attachments, which inspire all the relish and sweetness of private life, be supposed to be of no weight in the intercourse between great communities? These are principles of human nature, which act with much greater certainty on numbers than on individuals. If properly cultivated they may to us be productive of the noblest benefits; and at all events, will neither lessen the extent of our power nor shorten the duration of it.

When things are on so reasonable a footing, if there should happen to be any errors in government, they will soon be corrected by the friendly disposition of the people, and the endeavours to separate the interest of the colonies from that of Great Britain will be received with the indignation, that is due to the artifices of factious men who wish to grow eminent by the misfortunes of the country.

Even in that future state of independency, which some amongst them ignorantly wish for, but which for their true interest can never be too long delayed; the old and prudent will often look back on their present happiness with regret; and consider the peace and security, the fruits of visible improvement, and brotherly equality, which they enjoyed under the protection of their mother country, as the true golden age of America.

I need not suggest how favourable these dispositions must prove to the reception of the religious and benevolent doctrines, which it is the business of this Society to propagate. Under a mutual inclination to peace and good-will, the lessons of piety we teach will be heard with

that fair attention which always turns to the advantage of truth; and the claims we make will be estimated (which is all we ought to desire) by the reasonableness of them.

I own I feel upon my mind a strong impression of the publick advantages that would result from this benevolent and christian policy; and I could wish for the interest of mankind, and of our country in particular, that it may not be thought wholly of a visionary nature. I think I can see a strong and immediate demand upon us for such a conduct, from the situation we are in, and the unusual occurrences that have passed before us within a few years. There seems at present to be a great and general commotion, and tendency to change, in the minds of men. Animated by the gradual improvement of knowledge, and the fortunate example of this country, our neighbours have had the courage to think with greater freedom on the most important subjects, and to look for something better in religion and government, than they had established among themselves. And even in this land of liberty, where we have been long in possession of the most solid and valuable truths, the spirit of enquiry is still at work, and urging it's pursuits with a dangerous freedom, that risks more than it can hope to gain. At the same time not only discontent and faction, but the real difficulties of things, the extent, the fluctuation and the intricacies of commerce afford sufficient exercise for political wisdom. Add to this a vast accession of distant territory, the art of governing which we are yet to learn. Our colonies are rising into states and nations. The extreme boundaries of the world are opening to our view; and regions, unknown to our fathers, may soon become the objects of contention. In this great shifting scene of human affairs, the concerns of this extensive empire are growing every year into more importance and dignity. It behoves us to adopt some plan of conduct, that shall be suitable to our situation and the high character we sustain. The interest of Britain, considered singly by itself, might not at present be the sole; and in a few ages may not be the most considerable object of attention. We have

have already tried what advantage is to be found in governing by force; and have no reason to be proud of the experiment. What benefit has accrued to the publick from the plunder and desolation of an industrious helpless people? The whole profit, we have reaped from so much injustice and dishonour, has ended in fraudulent schemes, vain and extravagant expectations, ruinous expence and luxury; attended with a general loss of credit and confidence, a sudden suspension of commerce and industry, and an almost total stoppage of the main springs and vital motions of society. It requires a common degree of wisdom to deliver our country from such gains and such prosperity as this!

A great liberal commanding spirit is wanting; such as has appeared but rarely in modern times, but was better known to the ancients; which, without computing and calculating what is strictly due, can extort affection and gratitude by publick services; which can sacrifice liberty and even great interests to the establishment of a solid permanent authority, founded on justice and moderation, which permitting it's subjects to enjoy and improve their natural advantages, can always avail itself of their wealth and numbers for the defence or the glory of the empire; and is sure to find the most powerful resource of government in their friendship and love.

We presume not to instruct our rulers in the measures of government: but it is the proper office of a preacher of the gospel of peace, to point out the laws of justice and equity which must ultimately regulate the happiness of states as well as of individuals; and which are no other in effect than those benevolent christian morals, which it is the province of this Society to teach, transferred from the duties of private life to the administration of publick affairs. In fact, by what bond of union shall we hold together the members of this great empire, dispersed and scattered as they lie over the face of the earth? What power can be swift or extensive enough to answer this purpose. Some art must be employed to interest all distant parts in the preservation of the whole; which can only be effected by serving, obliging and protecting the

ought not to be the first object in contemplation, what we are to get by them; but how we can best improve, assist and reward them; by what benefits we may procure their happiness and win their affection. But is government then intitled to no emoluments in recompence for all its cares? I answer, that they who have the heart to do good to those who depend upon them, will always meet with an ample return. None are so sure to reap the benefits of the soil, as they who have spared no expence in the cultivation. And it is universally true, that the more we exact from our subjects, the less we shall gain from them. "BOUNTIFULNESS IS A PLENTIFUL GARDEN, AND MERCIFULNESS ENDURETH FOREVER." Let the distant nations, that depend upon us, be made to know and feel that they owe their peace and happiness to our protection. Let them be encouraged to consider themselves not as our slaves, but as our friends and brethren. And let us endeavour to wipe away the tears from the poor oppressed natives of India; and suffer them, if possible, to enjoy some taste of the legal security and civil liberty, which renders life dear to ourselves; which are blessings hitherto unknown to those climates, but more grateful to the heart of man, than all the fruits and odours which nature has lavished upon them. This righteousness and mercy, which is due to all men, but especially to those who are under our protection, is the law of nature, the command of religion, and it ought to be the first and leading maxim of civil policy. But it is amazing how slowly in all countries the principles of natural justice, which are so evidently necessary in private life, have been admitted into the administration of public affairs. Not many ages ago, it was customary to engage in war without a reasonable cause or provocation, and to carry it on without humanity or mercy. Since then, it is happily become necessary for states to explain their motives, and justify their conduct, before they begin to destroy their fellow-creatures. And blessed be the memory who first taught the soldier to spare the useful bandman, and to feel a horror at the shedding of innocent blood.

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It has been the policy of government, such as it is, from the earliest times to keep distant provinces and colonies under the most severe restraints and subjection. Yet when those restraints have been removed, the mother-country has always been a great gainer by the advantages she has communicated to her subjects. Indeed it is a truth, not more important than it is evident and obvious, that the most sure and effectual method of receiving good from men is to do good to them; or, as St. Paul beautifully expresses it, "TO PROVOKE ONE ANOTHER TO GOOD WORKS." But the minds of men are not sufficiently prepared and enlightened by experience to adopt it in practice. A time, I doubt not, will come, in the progressive improvement of human affairs, when the checks and restraints we lay on the industry of our fellow-subjects, and the jealousies we conceive at their prosperity, will be considered as the effects of a mistaken policy, prejudicial to all parties, but chiefly to ourselves. It would be a noble effort of virtuous ambition to anticipate this discovery; to break through the prejudices and selfish spirit of the age; to find a better path to our true interest; and to make our country great, and powerful, and rich, not by force or fraud, but by justice, friendship and humanity.

I should not have dwelt so long on so unusual a subject had it not been for the great and almost infinite importance of it. The virtue of a private man assists and supports a few individuals; but this public virtue does good to thousands and tens of thousands. The former relieves the distress of a friend, or of a family: the latter acts in a higher sphere; it founds states and kingdoms or makes them prosperous and happy. Yet all this merit which a nation can never sufficiently acknowledge, at least all that we presume to describe, consists in the right application of the plain good rules, which are so often repeated to us in scripture; "WHATSOEVER YE
" WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO UNTO YOU,
" YE EVEN SO UNTO THEM. FOLLOW THAT WHICH
" IS GOOD TO ALL MEN. LOOK NOT EVERY MAN
" ON HIS OWN THINGS, BUT EVERY MAN ALIKE."

“ ON THE THINGS OF OTHERS. BEAR YE ONE
“ ANOTHER’S BURTHENS, AND SO FULFIL THE
“ LAW OF CHRIST.” But these truths lie before the
eyes of men, like medicinal herbs in the open field ; and
for want of applying them to their proper objects, they
remain ignorant of their virtues. Yet we may say, with
a pious confidence, that this has not been our own case.
This Society has thought that we could not obey these
divine precepts in a manner more agreeable to the true
spirit of them, than by teaching to distant nations the
truths that are best calculated to make them happy.
Could we teach them to the great and the wise of this
world, that would be happiness indeed ; that would be
the most effectual and the most beneficial Propagation of
the Gospel, that the world has yet seen. Mankind would
then have an experimental proof of the salvation offered
to us from above ; and would acknowledge with gra-
titude the propriety of that message from Heaven,
“ GLORY BE TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST, ON EARTH
“ PEACE, GOOD-WILL TOWARDS MEN.”

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